

The President's Radio Address

June 8, 2007

Good morning. This week I am traveling in Europe, where I am meeting with world leaders to discuss ways to address challenges like climate change, to work together to combat diseases like malaria and HIV/AIDS, and help advance freedom throughout the world.

Back at home, America is engaged in an important discussion about immigration. Most Americans agree that the 1986 immigration law failed. It failed because it did not secure our border, it did not include tough worksite enforcement, it did not help people assimilate, and it encouraged more people to come here illegally. Today, illegal immigration is supported by criminal enterprises dedicated to document forgery, human trafficking, and labor exploitation. This is unacceptable, and we need to fix it in a way that honors our finest traditions.

People have strong feelings on this issue. I believe we can express our feelings, disagree on certain elements, and still come together on a solution. We can accomplish that through the bipartisan Senate bill. It is based on months of negotiation. The result is legislation that puts border security first, establishes a temporary-worker program to meet the legitimate needs of our growing economy, sets up a mandatory system for verifying employment eligibility, and resolves the status of the estimated 12 million people who are here illegally. If this bill becomes law, America will finally have in place a system that addresses all these problems and can be adjusted to address future problems that may arise.

I understand the skepticism some Members of Congress have regarding certain aspects of this legislation. Like any legislation, this bill is not perfect. And like many Senators, I believe the bill will need to be further improved along the way before it becomes law. In the heat of the debate, critics and supporters can sometimes talk past each other, so I want to speak to Members about some of the concerns I have heard.

I know some of you doubt that the Federal Government will make good on the border security and enforcement commitments in this bill. My administration is determined to

learn from the mistakes of the past decades. And that is why we are now committing more resources than ever before to border security, doubling the number of Border Patrol agents, building hundreds of miles of fencing, and employing advanced technology, from infrared sensors to unmanned aerial vehicles. The bill builds on this progress by requiring that we meet border security objectives before certain other provisions can take effect.

This bill also addresses other problems with the 1986 reform. Unlike the 1986 law, this bill includes a temporary-worker program to ensure that those who come here to work do so in a legal and orderly way. Unlike the 1986 law, this bill gives honest employers the tools they need to ensure that they are hiring legal workers, beginning with a tamper-resistant identity card. Businesses that knowingly hire illegal aliens will be punished. Workers who come here illegally will be sent home. And unlike the 1986 law, this bill does not grant amnesty for those who are already here.

Amnesty is forgiveness with no penalty for people who have broken our laws to get here. In contrast, this bill requires illegal workers to pay a fine, register with the Government, undergo background checks, pay their back taxes, and hold a steady job. And if at the end of 8 years they want to apply for a green card, they will have to pay an additional substantial fine, show they have learned English, and return to their home country so they can apply from there. In short, they will have to prove themselves worthy of this great land.

I also want to say a word to those in Congress concerned about family unification. This bill will create a merit-based point system that recognizes the importance of family ties by granting points to some applicants who have family members here legally. More than half of new green cards will go to family members. Immigrants will be allowed to bring in their spouses and minor children, and we will clear the backlog for millions of people who have been waiting patiently in line.

Securing the border and upholding family values are not partisan concerns; they are important to all Americans. They must be addressed, and this bill is the best way to do

it. I urge Senator Reid to act quickly to bring this bill back to the Senate floor for a vote, and I urge Senators from both parties to support it. The immigration debate has divided too many Americans. By coming together, we can build an immigration system worthy of this great Nation, one that keeps us safe and prosperous, welcomes dreamers and doesers from across the globe, and trusts in our country's genius for making us all Americans, one nation under God.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on June 8 in Heiligendamm, Germany, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m., e.d.t., on June 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 8. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

June 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

June 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Prague, Czech Republic, arriving in the evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Parliament Member Saad Hariri of Lebanon.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Hilton Atrium Hotel Prague.

June 5

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Atrium Hotel Prague, he and Mrs. Bush met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Prague Castle, where, on the First Courtyard, they participated in an arrival ceremony with President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic and his wife, Livia Klausova. Then, in the Hapsburg Salon, they participated in a photo opportunity and met with President Klaus and Mrs. Klausova.

In the afternoon, in Rudolph's Gallery, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in a social luncheon with President Klaus and Mrs. Klausova. He then returned to the Hilton Atrium Hotel Prague.

Later in the afternoon, the President met with Social Democratic Party leader Jiri Paroubek of the Czech Republic. He and Mrs. Bush then traveled to Czernin Palace. Later, in the Music Salon, they met with democracy advocates.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Rostock, Germany. While en route aboard Air Force One, he was informed of the sentence handed down in the trial of former Chief of Staff to the Vice President I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Heiligendamm, Germany, where, upon arrival, they went to the Kempinski Grand Hotel Heiligendamm.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to attend the inauguration of Amadou Toumani Toure as President of Mali on June 8: Mike Johanns (head of delegation); Josephine K. Olsen; Morgan W. Davis; Mary Beth Leonard; Steven Phillips; and Judy Van Rest.

June 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush met with musicians and activists Bono, Sir Robert Geldof, and Youssou N'Dour. Later, they traveled to Hohen Luckow, Germany. They then went to the Gut Hohen Luckow estate, where they attended a reception, entertainment, and a dinner for G-8 leaders and their spouses hosted by Chancellor Merkel and her husband, Joachim Sauer.